MUTINY!

A MILITANT MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM AN ANARCHIST-COMMUNIST PERSPECTIVE

MAY 21

Freedom for Palestine!

Statement from Anarchist-Communist Groups in Oceania

Since the 19th century, the Zionist movement has waged brutal colonial war against Palestinian Arab society, nearly without pause. The recent attempted evictions in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of occupied East Jerusalem is only the latest in a long history of oppression and victimisation of the Palestinian working classes.

On Thursday 6 May, Palestinians began protests against the impending Israeli Supreme Court decision to evict Palestinians from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in Jerusalem. As the protests escalated, Israel responded with violence, which only spurred further escalation. Expulsion of Palestinians from their homes and their land has been reinforced by an apartheid-style regime, bolstered by US imperialism. In turn, the Israeli state supports and encourages pogroms against Palestinians. Examples of Zionist violence abound — the bulldozing of Palestinian homes in Jenin, with civilians still inside; the use of white phosphorus during Operation Cast Lead; the establishment of Gaza as the "world's largest open air prison" where Palestinian nationals are starved and subjected to horrific violations of their dignity. Israel has threatened to continue the attack until there is "total quiet", a metaphor for ethnic cleansing in the face of popular resistance.

But as with all forms of resistance, the current struggle does not have one cause: alongside the economic shock triggered by COVID-19, Palestinians in the West Bank have also been provoked by the decision of the unpopular leader of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, to postpone upcoming elections — elections he knows he will lose.

In Gaza, resistance is largely led by Hamas – a right-wing, religious-nationalist and conservative organisation that oppresses the Palestinian working class in its own right. Israeli terror plays into the hands of Hamas and their project, preventing the Palestinian resistance from developing along working-class lines.

Palestinian resistance is not simply the concern of Palestinians, or of Muslims, or of humanitarians: it is the concern of all workers across the world. The success of the Palestinian struggle is dependent on its internationalisation, turning the struggle of this one group into a truly global working-class struggle that will not only answer "the national question" but the fundamental question of capitalism too. This is even more the case today as neighbouring Arab governments like Egypt and those in the Gulf abandon the façade of their opposition and formalise their alliances with Israel. If the struggles for liberty in these countries link up with the struggle in Palestine, then neither Israel nor the Arab dictatorships stand a chance.

The wildcat resistance by the Palestinians caught both Fatah, the main party of the Palestinian Authority, and Hamas, the main party in Gaza, off guard. Neither party controls the protests, which have overwhelmingly targeted the Israeli state. The response of Hamas has been to fire rockets at Israel, targeting civilians, in an attempt to demobilise the protests; by transferring the struggle onto the military plane, Hamas hopes to sideline the Palestinian masses and prevent them from developing a working-class alternative for their resistance.

As anarchists our position against nationalism should not be mistaken for opposition to resistance — we are against nationalism because we believe that resistance can only be truly successful without it. Israel's occupation is a naked form of colonial oppression, and its Palestinian victims have every right to resist it by whatever means that are in accord with the final goal of liberation.

Liberal world leaders, be they American, Australian, spokespeople for the EU or the UN, speak of 'de-escalation' and 'restraint by both sides'; they only justify the ongoing oppression of Palestine. There are no two equal sides at war. The Palestinian masses are resisting oppression.

Only solidarity between the oppressed people of Palestine and the working classes of the world can end the occupation. We call on the international anarchist movement and all working-class rebels to join us in denouncing the Israeli occupation of Palestine and support the resistance to it.

MUTINY! SYDNEY

Sex Work, Sexism, and Unionism

This article involves discussion of sexual vioence.

As news emerged in April that Nationals MP Michael Johnson had raped a sex worker, the Liberals and Nationals didn't flinch in moralising over the employment of a sex worker to distract from the crisis of sexism pervasive in their parties, and in the ruling class as a whole. But why could the government so readily scapegoat sex work to distract from sexism? And what role does sex work play in Australian society?

We can find the answers by looking at why the ruling class uses its cultural and material power to reinforce gender roles in the nuclear family. Sex work is is best understood as a form of "social reproduction", a type of work whose product is the reproduction of workers and their capacity to labour. This type of labour is as diverse as housework, to childhood education, to sex and the raising of children, to the cultural reproduction of the nuclear family. Like other forms of work, sex work has existed for centuries alongside class societies, but has changed substantially under the the nuclear family arrangement, which was a necessary part of the growth of capitalism.

Oppressive gender difference in social roles exists in class societies as a method of reinforcing the class system. These diverse forms of gender differences were kneaded and exacerbated by in the transition between feudalism to capitalism including in methods of capitalist expansion like colonialism and imperialism, dividing the feudal peasant or colonised subject into the male wage worker, and the female 'housewife' who tended to his needs. This division of work continues to this day, as working women still fulfil the majority of social reproductive tasks across capitalist societies, regardless of their individual employment status.

With this analysis in mind we can understand what unites sex work as such a diverse industry, which includes camming, OnlyFans subscriptions, stripping, full in-person service. In general we can theorise all these activities as an intensive form of feminised service-driven entertainment: it's not only about satisfying a direct sexual desire, but it's about providing a sense of intimacy and human interaction that is alienated under the social stranglehold of capitalist life. In this sense sex work is 'social reproduction' work as its an industry predicated around alleviating social alienation, thereby alleviating the negative effects of unmanaged social alienation on the labour force.

Whilst sex workers perform a social reproductive function the industry subverts the very nuclear family that capitalism built to make women bear the cost of social reproductive labour without payment. This gives it a contradictory position as a form of labour: as fulfilling a 'reproductive' need, whilst being criminalised and suppressed in the name of 'family values'. This explains both why sex work has continued to persist despite the oppression by state criminalisation and workplace violence. It also helps explain the existance of gay sex workers, male stripping and sex work by non-women, as sex work as work is about alienation; the terms of that alienation and the conditions of work are determined by sexism.

So called radical feminism poses the argument that sex work is an inhetently oppressive act as it involves 'selling the body' of a women to a man. This ignores that under our current system, all labour requires 'selling your body' for a wage, and that there is nothing more inherently oppressive about the nature of sex work than there is about domestic labour, nursing, or teaching. Given sex in abstract isn't oppressive, then the commodification of sex cannot be oppressive beyond what labour and social conditions are placed on that commodification. Therefore the real oppression within sex work lies in the conditions of work that are imposed on these feminised industries, which has often meant wage gaps between feminised and non-feminised industry, but in the case of sex work has meant an increase of legal controls over the work, rather than anything inherent to the activity. The criminalisation of sex work, proposed as a solution to 'liberate' women from the industry, instead makes cops the bosses of sex workers and leads to further exploitation by the state and sex workers more vulnerable to violence in general.

However it's not enough to declare that sex work is work, our task is to develop a strategy to give sex workers power over their own industry and lives. The approach of the radical feminists - to try to eliminate sex work via the legal and police system - has not only failed but is inherely flawed, precisely because sex work will continue to have a purpose under capitalism, and also as its premise rests on the false assumption that sex work is inherently more exploitative than other wage relationships. Instead, our strategy should not be to abolish, but transform sex work. We do this by winning reforms that decrease the power of the ruling class to oppress workers: by fully decriminalising the industry and ending police control over sex workers, and to organise industrially with workers to support and protect themselves. Looking to our immediate future, we have to fight with sex worker calls for changes to the Anti-Discrimination Act, to make it illegal for sex workers to be discriminated for their profession, and to oppose the threats posed on self worker autonomy and safety by the Online Safety Bill, which could permit suppression and margionalisation of sex worker voices and work. Beyond that, we should be looking to build industrial unionism for sex workers - to topple the state oppression, fight against exploitative bosses, and unite with other works to smash the entire system.

Budget 2021-2: Border Imperialism Continues

This budget lays the plans to strengthen the attacks on refugees and bolster Australian imperialism.

The 2021-2 budget is largely a continuation of Australia's imperialist border policies, with some minor adjustments.

Over the coming years, the government forecasts lower occupancy rates in the offshore detention centres we oversee; accordingly, whilst $2.059 billion will be spent on the "management of unlawful non-citizens" in 2021-22, that figure will drop to $1.3 billion by 2024-25. As such, the current arrangement of paying off neighbouring countries to brutalise refugees on our behalf will continue, scaled to the number of refugees that need brutalising.

$38.1 million will be provided to the Indonesian government under the Regional Cooperation Agreement to prevent refugees from reaching our shores. Most of the work undertaken as part of this agreement is carried out by the International Organisation for Migration, IOM, a global NGO; in this instance, it is functionally an arm of the Indonesian and Australian governments. It helps manage detention centres, launches advertising campaigns warning refugees not to take boats to Australia, pays refugees to go back to the places they fled from, and generally strengthens Indonesian border controls.

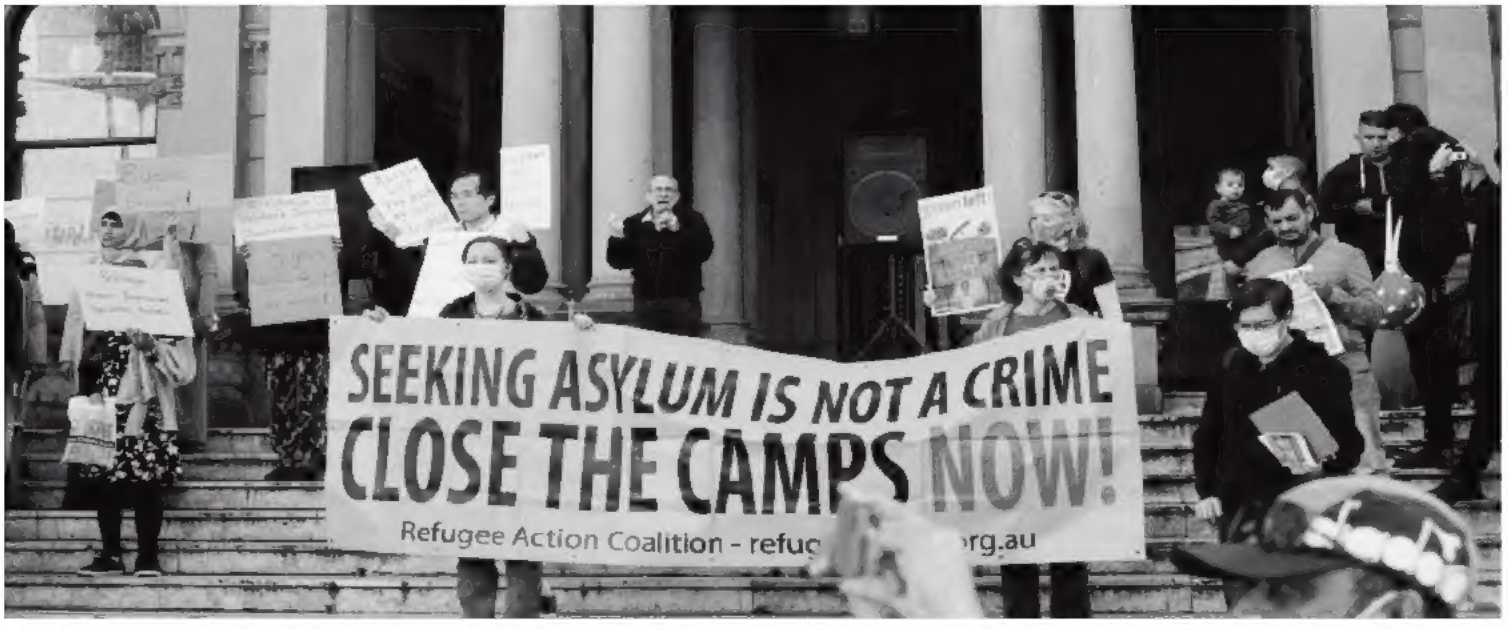
Over 10 000 refugees live in miserable conditions in Indonesia – they have no legal work rights, and Indonesia does not offer the opportunity of permanent resettlement. There they are in three different types of living arrangements: in detention centres, are homeless, or reside in IOM-managed "community housing" facilities that function much more like open prisons than normal accommodation. They have curfews and rules, and if they are broken IOM can send residents back to the detention centres. IOM also only provides support to those who arrived before March 2018; funding was cut to those who arrived after in order to deter refugees from coming there in the future. In the Orwellian language of the Australian government, this is to prevent the meagre "care" given to refugees in Indonesia by IOM from becoming a "pull factor" that brings refugees closer to our shores.

In onshore detention, $464.7m has been allocated to upgrading the existing detention network. $278.2m of that will be spent on general upgrades, but $163.9m specifically will go towards extending and bolstering the Christmas Island Immigration Detention Centre. Christmas Island is as absurd as it is abhorrent; for a significant amount of time, tens of millions were being spent to detain Priya and Nades Murugappan and their two children Kopika and Tharnicaa, a beloved Tamil refugee family who were forcibly removed from their new hometown of Biloela in rural Queensland to be deported to Sri Lanka, where there is significant risk to their lives.

For a brief time at the beginning of the COVID-crisis, they were joined by Australian evacuees from Wuhan province. Since then, the detention centre has been populated by others that are due to be deported but cannot be shifted due to the current complexities of international travel. Many of these are 501 visa cancellation cases – non-citizen residents of Australia who have had their visas cancelled on character grounds, usually as a result of criminal charges.

It was this group that led the unrest at the facility in January 2021, in protest at the miserable conditions they were forced to endure; the conditions were often worse than the conditions in the actual prisons they had once been in. Such unrest – which included a number of deliberately lit fires – has sufficiently spooked the government into spending the money on "facility hardening" to "mitigate risks, including the risks of future riots".

$29.3 million over three years has been provided with the goal of supporting the "safety and economic inclusion" of refugee and other migrant women. $10.3m is going towards the extension of a program where the Red Cross gives up to $3000 to female holders of Temporary Protection Visas experiencing family violence, so they can better cover day-to-day expenses like food, accommodation and utilities. This small amount of cash thrown at a distinctly marginalised cohort may help many, but it steps around the real ways forward: granting permanent protection and full social support to all refugees. To win those demands, and to smash the refugee detention complex, we will need a working class movement that defies imperialism in Australia and abroad.



Smoke and mirrors in the aged care sector

The budget is the ruling class's plan on administering capital. With the aged care industry on the rise and the increasing aging population of Australia, we analyse how the ruling class plans to mold that industry.

With the signing of the accords between the union bureaucracy and the Labor government in the 1980s, wages, conditions, and union rights were curtailed by the government with the help of the union bureaucracy in exchange for a promise of social security - medicare, aged care, disability care, and much of the public services we see today. Whilst the cuts on wages and attacks on workers rights persist, successive governments have made it their task to progressively dismantle the deceptive carrot offered to sweeten this poisoned deal forty years ago.

This whittling away can be seen especially in the aged care sector, which is under special scrutiny given the failure of the government's vaccine rollout and the aged care deaths as a result of a deliberately poorly regulated, staffed, and trained private sector. The biggest 'change' to the aged care industry featured prominently within the press is the announcement that over the next five years the funding in the aged care sector is to be raised by $17.7 billion. This sounds like an impressive response to the government's recent failings, but in context they form part of a progessive axing of the industry. Even the Royal Commission into age care recommended a further $10 billion a year to support which this budget will fall short of by $6.5 billion a year, and these commissions are often stacked with pro-government figures and whose recommendations are cherry picked to support the policy of the day.

Of course, money isn't everything - under capitalism it is simply the way resources are allocated, rather than being able to manifest material needs out of thin air. Whilst 'efficiencies' can be found here and there, fundamentally as Australia's population ages, the need for adequate care grows, especially as the wages and conditions that once allowed for the financial and social support of the elderly were traded away to the state with the accords. This is the real need that the government's deliberate lack of funding is failing to meet.

The federal government has committed to increasing care time per day to 200 minutes and to increase training places by 33,800. Whilst this goes some way to alleviate the problem, there is no commitment to increase the pay and conditions of the aged care workers themselves, who often are only given $21 an hour for difficult and technical work. With the lack of increased funding but the increased level of productivity expected, the only way the government is expecting the industry to improve is by making aged care workers work more efficiently for the same money. This double squeeze, of slowly limiting funding, increasing requirements of aged care workers, but not increasing pay or improving conditions, will only heighten exploitation and reward ruthless

private aged care facilities.

People both in aged care facilities and at in-home care will always present choices to these systems that are untenable to the profit motive. What happens when someone needs an expensive treatment that they can't afford or that needs extra care that the overworked staff are unable to provide? Do we really expect a company to cut its own profits to step in and do the right thing? Whilst anarchists plan for a day where there's no state and public care is truly in the hands of the public and not bureaucrats and bosses, it would be naive to deny that in the present moment the increasing privatisation and slow cuts of the sector is in contradiction of the direct welfare of the people who need it most. This is what this budget has fundamentally lacked, a perspective of people's welfare leading the recovery. Welfare for all must be what we fight for in our immediate struggles without losing sight of the long goal of liberation.

Black Flag Sydney

Mutiny is published by Black Flag Sydney, an anarcho-communist organisation in Sydney. We aim to build the power of working class movements against capitalism, and to provide an analysis of capitalism and the state that grows the force of revolutionary anarchist ideas in Sydney, with the goal of stateless communism. We acknowledge that we operate on is unceded Aboriginal land, and that the struggle for First Nation's sovereignty is the struggle for the liberation of the entire working class.

BLACK FLAG SYDNEY

Upcoming Events

Our sister group, Sydney Anarcho-Communists, runs an open fortnightly reading group on Tuesdays at 6pm, at Jura Books, 440 Parramatta Road Petersham - for all those interested in discussing and learning about anarchist and communist ideas.

For any enquiries about this newsletter, please email contact@blackflagsydney.com

Sydney Anarcho-Communists

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SYDNEY ANARCHO-COMMUNISTS

15th June	Palestine and National Liberation
29th June	Anarcho-Feminism
13th July	Anarchism in Ireland